

**Appendix A**

**137 SUNGARD VIVISTA PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services introducing the six-monthly progress report from the IT contractor, Sungard Vivista.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Williams to the meeting. In response to a Member request he provided an explanation around some of the technological terms used in Sungard Vivista's report as follows:-

- Workstation - a computer, screen, desk and telephone.
- Laptop – a lightweight mobile computer.
- Thin client terminal – consists of a box and keyboard but no processor or hard drive. As a result there is less to go wrong and it is easier and cheaper to buy and use and does not need an upgrade each year. It takes its intelligence from the server rather than the terminal itself. There was less risk of a problem affecting thin client terminals than with standard personal computers. Statistics proved that thin client was more reliable.
- Call stack – the list of calls held at the service desk in response to faults reported by customers. By reducing the stack it was possible to respond quicker, thereby reducing the backlog of calls.
- Wireless technology – the computer is no longer connected by a cable allowing the mobile user to walk around, whilst getting information from the base unit.
- E-claim connectivity – the availability of the housing benefit claim form via the internet enabled the Council to meet one of its Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) targets.
- Exchange 2003 – a box which acts as a telephone exchange between the server and the network users.
- Skillwise – a housing benefits system that monitors training and evaluates competency of staff.

In respect of progress made since Sungard Vivista had last reported in to this Committee, Mr Williams advised that:-

- There had been a significant improvement in the service they provided to the Council.

- The call stack had been reduced, with a faster response resulting in less time offline for the customer. This led to greater productivity.
- There was improved call handling, with around 95% of calls being answered within 5 rings; this had improved user satisfaction.
- A number of projects were being progressed of which the roll out of thin client terminals would be a major one.
- Improvements were being made to the way systems work to improve business; software to undertake an automated asset audit had been installed that indicated what equipment and peripherals were attached to the system and what software they ran. This would enable quicker diagnosis of issues with specific machines and the faster roll-out of the next phase of the thin client terminals.
- A new senior area manager had been recruited who had been well received by users. However, Mr Williams indicated that one of the difficulties encountered by Sungard Vivista locally was in the recruitment of qualified staff with the right background and skills level.

In response to Member questions it was noted that:-

- Associated with the roll out of thin client terminals, sophisticated firewalls and virus protection were already in place. This would be constantly reviewed with upgrades provided as necessary.
- Capacity management was now much more cost effective, although it was still necessary to employ good housekeeping methods such as the archiving, shrinking, zipping, compression or destroying of files.
- Internal controls facilitated checking for fraudulent on line benefits claims.
- A recent problem with the on line planning facility had occurred because, whilst 24 x 7 server support was provided, this was not the case for the software applications as issues in this area required the input of both Sungard Vivista and the third party system supplier. On this occasion, monitoring software designed to indicate when an application was down had not picked up the problem. Issues such as this caused inconvenience to the user. Vivista would continue to discuss ways of addressing this, but there would be cost implications. However this would still not address the problem of an individual application supplied by a provider who did not offer 24 x 7 assistance. The aim would always be to reduce the downtime to a minimum and currently the website as a whole was available for 98.44% of the available time. Discussions around this would be continuing.
- There were no plans to use bespoke applications, generic applications generally proved more cost effective and reliable.

- The dated Brandt Finance system would be replaced this Autumn.
- 65% of responses made to a poll conducted via the Council's web site indicated that the web site was found to be useful. A more sophisticated exit survey was also being conducted which would provide more detailed information from users.

Officers advised that in general terms it could be noted that there had been an improvement within the last six months of the contract; specifically in respect of a more organised way of dealing with customer calls and increased customer confidence in the on-site team. However, more work was needed on forward planning and strategic advice to enable the more timely introduction of major projects such as the implementation of the thin client terminals.

Vivista acknowledged that whilst the majority of users had indicated in a recent survey that they valued the service provided, there was room for improvement in certain areas.

In discussion it was concluded that six-monthly progress reports from Vivista were adequate, particularly as officers met with on site contractors on a daily basis and formal monthly contract meetings were conducted, as well as a quarterly user group meeting. However, Members requested that future update reports should contain more guidance with specific officer recommendations to inform their decision making.

### **Resolved**

That, whilst there was overall satisfaction with Sungard Vivista's latest progress report, the Committee had some reservations and would expect to see improvements in the near future. (HAMS)